

## **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Advisory Board**

### **12.21.11 Meeting minutes**

#### **BOS Meeting room**

##### **Present:**

John McCormack, Chairman  
Katie Chambers  
Al Hicks  
George Infanti

##### **Excused:**

Dave Roedel  
Tom Wilson

Jim DeStefano, Grubb & Ellis/Coldstream RE  
Bill Parker, Director Community Development/TIF Administrator

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J. McCormack called the meeting to order at 7:30AM without a quorum present and no votes were taken.

#### **1. Review of Agenda & Minutes**

J. McCormack reviewed the meeting notes from June 2, 2011.

#### **2. Update on Andover/Ecotech agreement timeframes and proposed zoning amendments (Commerce and Community Overlay District)**

J. DeStefano said the Andover Group is cautiously pessimistic right now about the Brox site without a larger game plan and access. They are just trying to get a handle on things, but it's got their time and focus. He is confident that the best developer available for this property is the one you are working with. B. Parker said Andover has had good discussions with Hendrix; some discussion with the Hansen's who own the key piece in the middle and will also contact the Trott family. Realistically, the development of the Brox land hinges on the access from the 101 bypass. We've made it known publically and through letters that we're pushing for that, but the State DOT is in some confusion right now with no money, so it will be a struggle. G. Infanti said Peter Bragdon and Dave Wheeler have been extremely instrumental in getting things done at the state level and maybe Dave Wheeler could help.

J. McCormack inquired if there were any costs for the access yet. B. Parker replied no, Andover is moving forward very slowly. They don't want to sink a lot of money into this just yet or at least until they know how the Town will vote.

K. Chambers inquired about the status of the former police station property. B. Parker said it is under option with agreement and the Andover Group has until 12/31/2014 to do the master planning and to get through the Planning Board process. In meetings with Ryan, he indicated that they are working with someone who sees this site as desirable but there is no timeline yet. We are also waiting for revised language from the EPA regarding the easement.

A. Hicks inquired about the original hotel location. B. Parker said there have been discussions with the owner of that property as well as a possible location further to the west. At least that word is out, that Milford is looking for a hotel.

B. Parker passed around a draft of the proposed Commerce and Community District Ordinance that is required for the development of the district and explained the details and extent of the district from the map entitled, Commerce and Community District. It's pretty much all undeveloped land that includes the Brox Community lands, the TIF District, the Hansen, Lorden, Hawes, Trott and Kokko lands as well as the Beaver Brook land. The Planning Board is looking to this as where Milford's growth should occur in the next ten to thirty years. The ordinance is a new type of land regulations built on form based zoning, which is seen around the rest of the country with large master planned developments. There will be an expedited review process and streamlined permitting. The district will include large amounts of open space, mixed uses, and residential neighborhoods for a community feel interspersed with businesses and also commercial and industrial uses. The Planning Board and Sarah have been working on this steadily for the last several months and Ryan and their engineers have also

reviewed at this. The ordinance provides the flexibility they need and even if Andover doesn't go through with the deal, this is a significant way to develop the whole property and to attract a developer.

G. Infanti brought up incentives being offered by other areas of the country and said we need to show open arms to developers. With as much time as we've taken to explain what's going on, people just don't get it. They are short sighted about money and don't get that just one building could more than offset what would be put into the general fund from the sale of the former police station. It's important for the town to be supportive of Andover or whoever, and say we want you here and we're willing to work with you; however, that is not the message that the general taxpayers have sent out. Amherst gained \$400,000 in taxes from F.W. Webb and if we had done the marketing that Milford has done over the last two years, we'd have more than F.W. Webb on the property behind Wal-Mart, because the utilities and roads are in and the land is flat. B. Parker said the economic downturn has afforded us the time to put ordinances like this into play, form the EDAC and as much as we can, get all the tools in place so that when the economy does turn, we can pull people in right away. J. DeStefano said that expedited approvals are an extra arrow to throw out into a deal.

B. Parker stated that we've done a lot of public outreach for this district. We've gone to the dump, postcards are going out this week to the owners and Sarah, Janet and I have done what's called a "Community Conversation" that's playing on public access TV right now to explain the new district. There's been no public outcry, either one way or the other, and people we've talked to said it will be good to get something going out there. We've had one public hearing so far, and no one showed up.

J. McCormack referenced a conversation with Dean Jackson of the Stabile Companies who told him that the housing market is still poor. We've been through this before and there may be a few more lean years. Stabile will continue with the Reserve in Milford and Fells Point in Amherst, but their new investments will happen in Massachusetts within the circle corridor of Boston. B. Parker said that points to the aging population of New Hampshire and how difficult it is to attract younger people without job growth.

J. DeStefano gave a market update and said the vacancy rates for commercial real estate are still hovering around 15% and office vacancy is at 20%. Office vacancy in Detroit is 30%, so that is not a huge difference. We also don't know what percentage of that rented space is actually current with the rent. A landlord would rather have a tenant behind in their rent than a vacant building. It wouldn't take long to fill a 50,000SF or 100,000SF high bay, building with multiple docks sitting on the Brox property because there's not a lot of modern high bay available product. He then referenced an Amherst company that just bought a building on Powers St because it was the best building available in the region, and they looked in several towns. There are area companies, who are expanding and looking to make a long term presence. It is not realistic for them to consider the Brox land, but there are developers looking for a hundred acre site for correctional facilities. Other employers are considering expanding, but not here because they can get space for \$3 or \$4 per SF within a relatively close area. Eventually this land will be desirable but at \$80/SF to develop, it can't compete and there are still many factors that inhibit new construction/development in this area. Again, we're cautious about 2012 but we are still here in business and we are still reaching out.

G. Infanti said it's not just the developers who are affected; the building industry runs this country, and everybody is feeling this.

K. Chambers noted that the Brox Property is listed under Industrial Parks of 50 acres or more in the PSNH publication and for the casual reader it would be eye-catching because it is priced so much lower than anything else listed. The pamphlet compares all fifty states and it portrays New Hampshire in a fabulous light compared to the rest of the country. J. DeStefano said the folks at PSNH are great and really fill in a lot of the economic development gaps. B. Parker said he and Guy recently met with their new community relations person and PSNH definitely has Milford on their radar. They are very pro-Milford and have always been involved with the downtown.

### **3. Discussion and recommendation of support on warrant articles:**

B. Parker said he hasn't gotten any feedback regarding the proposed warrant articles but will be meeting with the Board of Selectmen on Tuesday 12/27/11 to present and asked for support from this group. The Budget Advisory

Committee seems to be a good group this year; one that is open and reasonable. He will schedule a date for this group to meet with them. J. McCormack said we should let them know that Andover is still serious about development and is in the game for the long haul. G. Infanti said the Budget Advisory Committee would be a wonderful group to have on board. B. Parker said this year the Selectmen and Budget Advisory Committee will have joint meetings. Of course there are concerns about a possible 4-6% increase in the budget with the new ambulance facility and fire truck on the ballot.

J. McCormack brought up the results of last year's failed warrant articles and stated that more people voted to fund the fund than to establish the fund. This is a reality check and we need to convey to those voters that this development still represents a good value for the town. B. Parker said we should be cautious about saying anything in reference to housing with the BAC because they've been historically anti-housing, especially multi-family as being the root of all the town's ills when the facts don't necessarily support that. There was a brief discussion as to whether it would be better to have local individuals speak to the BAC or ask Ryan to show there is serious development interest.

Highlights and bullet points for the Budget Advisory Committee:

- Future tax benefit,
- The money that goes into the fund will get paid back,
- Possible developer for the old police station land,
- Conceptual plan.

J McCormack said we should encourage the voters to set up the fund and that there is no harm in just setting it up. The funding can come later. A. Hicks said that the Budget Advisory Committee members may see that as a threat, and may see that as revenue that should be going into the general fund and isn't. Once you set it up, there is a chance of funding it. B. Parker added that some of last year's skepticism was because none of the details about the deal were able to be made public and people were uncomfortable without knowing the specifics. B. Parker suggested a "Community Conversation" to talk about the warrant articles.

#### **4. Other business:**

K. Chambers asked if there have been any inquiries about the two lots on Brookview that the school is selling. S. Wilson said there have been a couple but only about basic zoning information.

J. McCormack adjourned the meeting at 8:30 AM.

Next meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday 1/18/12 at 7:30am.

